

EDDC Cultural Strategy Delivery

04.11.2025

Theme 1

Strengthen and support the 'people-that-do'

Support the unique, community-led cultural organisations whose efforts enhance the high quality of life and wellbeing in East Devon's towns and villages

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Activity
1.1 Invest in and strengthen our many thriving, often volunteer-run cultural venues and programmes across East Devon	1.1.1 Build post-Covid confidence and capacity for volunteers and community groups in our towns and parishes through training in governance, business planning, digital transformation, fundraising and reducing carbon impact, as well as training in core creative skills, such as producing live events, interpretation, collections management	Short/Medium	Completed	Bespoke arts training delivered in 2023-25: Fundraising x2, Marketing x6, Volunteer Recruitment and Retention, Carbon Literacy, Collections Management, Governance, Public Speaking, Bid Writing, Mentoring x2, Producing Live Events, Accreditation for Museums & Care of Photography, Social Media Advertising, Corporate Sponsorship, Individual Giving, Digital Accessibility, Natural History Collections Display. Continue to share free training opps. in the ACED newsletter for example promoting East Devon VCSE and Digital Culture Network. Community Action Group (CAG) project also supports local community groups, providing advice on volunteer recruitment and retention, governance, digital transformation and event organisation.
	1.1.2 Enhance the quality and appeal of collections, and the sustainability of local museums, through a programme of shared capital investment in display and interpretation	Medium	In Progress	Budleigh Museum awarded £4,860 for LED lights through CLTF in 2023. Whimble Museum awarded £869 for display improvements through Creative East Devon Fund (CEDF) in 2023. Currently no funding available for significant capital investment. Digital equipment grant supported x6 Museums in Feb 2025. Decarbonisation survey carried out for Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) in 2024. Axminster Heritage Centre awarded £2043 for new WW2 exhibition in 2025 through CEDF in 2025.

	1.1.3 Explore the potential of a new network that supports more community asset transfers and sharing of policy support and good practice for village halls and other cultural venues, to ensure their place at the heart of our communities	Medium	In progress	EDDC has a community asset transfer procedure in place and this may be something to explore in the context of LGR.
1.2 Support and champion volunteering	1.2.1 Celebrate East Devon's volunteers through recognition and rewards	Short	Completed	District wide ACED Volunteer Award set up in 2024 and continued in 2025. This will become an annual recognition award (x10 glass awards have been commissioned through UK SPF to present up to 2033). Wild East Devon run thank you events for volunteers 3 times a year. 2 volunteer training sessions delivered in volunteer week 2024. National Landscapes has the Ambassador network with annual Ackland Award.
	1.2.2 Explore the potential for promoting and diversifying volunteering opportunities through a central portal, such as Volunteer Makers	Medium	Completed	Completed in July 2023, through new ACED website. Currently 88 cultural organisations listing volunteering opportunities in the cultural sector.

Theme 2

Protect and enhance the natural environment

Establish East Devon as an innovator and regional beacon of culture-led environmental protection, enhancement and activism

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Comments
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2.1 Develop a year-round programme that celebrates and connects people with East Devon's natural environment and inspires them to protect and enhance it – potentially in collaboration with South Somerset	2.1.1 Link with a range of nature, tourism and cultural organisations, and the University of Exeter, to audit/understand the current offer and develop an ambitious year-round programme, connecting culture and nature across the district	Short/Medium	In Progress	THG currently running Climate Conversations programme & Carbon Literacy Training. CAG held part of their skills share at the THG. THG supported EDNL on commissioning an artist for 'Nature Calling Project' in 2025. Wild East Devon host various nature events. ACED Climate Change Champion presented at ACED meeting in 2024 and continues to be actively engaged in this area. Letter of support for Friends of the Exe written from ACED for NLHF bid in Jan 2025. EDNL: River Axe, Rivers Run Through Us project. Axminster Guildhall awarded £43,000 in Carbon Action Fund and £20,000 in CLTF to decarbonise and improve performance space. The Beehive awarded £20,000 for LEDs in CLTF. The tourism strategy has an active nature strand which is developing more walking trails and linked biking trails, potentially with cultural venues. Creative East Devon Fund (CEDF) supporting 8 projects linked to sustainability. Alignment with the the EDDC climate change strategy is a key criteria for scoring CEDF bids (see 2.1.3).
	2.1.2 Work with local museums and South West Museums Development to engage in national conversations about the climate crisis and enable displays of natural science and biodiversity collections in East Devon's museums	Medium	In progress	Arts Council bid submitted in 2024 with Exmouth Museum, Fairlynch and Seaton Museum on biodiversity project with local schools was unfortunately unsuccessful due to high competition. Expert from RAMM delivered Natural History Display Training to 4 coastal ED museums in Feb 2025. £20,011 awarded to Whimple History Society through Carbon Action Fund. £4,680 awarded to Fairlynch Museum through CLTF. THG is delivering carbon action training.

	2.1.3 Invest in initiatives which work closely with communities in creative, innovative ways to connect local people with nature and the challenges we face in preserving it, especially within communities not currently engaging. For example: Tidelines (Exmouth), Sidmouth Seafest, Thelma Hulbert Gallery's Creative Cabin (touring)	Short	In Progress	Invested in vehicle to transport Creative Cabin in 2023 to over 16 events engaging over 100 young people through UK SPF, including Sidmouth Seafest. Multiple projects funded through Creative East Devon Fund inc: Tidelines, Overwintering (£3,000) & Rocks to Reef (£3,000), Sidmouth School of Art, Winter Lights Festival: Save Our Seas (£3,000) & Confluence (£2969), Chhaya Collective & Plastic Free Exmouth (£2,990), Exmouth Town Council, Magpies Festival of Thrift (£2,000), Budleigh Lit. Festival (£1680), The Beehive upcoming climate change exhibition: We are all People of Power (£1450). EDDC Green Infrastructure Project Manager is also working closely with Poltimore, National Trust and Cranbrook in this area.
2.2 Improve the environmental practices of the district's cultural festivals to establish them as leaders in sustainable event management	2.2.1 Use Julie's Bicycle, a recognised tool for monitoring cultural impact, to support EDDC-funded and independent festivals to monitor and improve their environmental performance, leading to a sustainable events guide	Short/Medium	In Progress	£10K grant from Green Team for decarbonisation pilot with Exmouth Festival. South West Energy and Environmental Group have created bespoke carbon calculator, 5% carbon reduction confirmed for 2024 and continue to implement this going forward. Toolkit now available on ACD website and learnings shared at ACED Network meeting, Arts & Culture Forum & Tourism Network Meeting. Sustainability questions are on EDDC event application forms and an EDDC sustainability guide is shared with all organisers.

Theme 3

Cultural tourism

Establish new cultural products, partnerships and promotional activity to mutually benefit and grow the creative and visitor economies

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Comments
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3.1 Test new collaborations to pilot new products that can support growth in sustainable cultural tourism	3.1.1 Linking with the new Tourism Strategy, develop a central 'what's on' hub to inform both the tourism industry and consumers about the local cultural offer	Short	Completed	East Devon Excellence hosts a What's On webpage: https://eastdevonexcellence.co.uk/event-directory . EDE now also hosts new digital cultural map.
	3.1.2 Support new 'product development' in the tourism sector to attract visitors beyond the peak season by working with cultural partners to promote art classes, retreats, workshops, links with food, wellbeing, sustainability and nature	Medium	Completed	Funding from UK SPF Tourism programme and Cultural programme has created new cultural tourism map (https://eastdevonexcellence.co.uk/culture), featuring 50 partners. 40K copies printed and distributed to high footfall areas across SW through Glide Media. Promoted through PR agency Chalk and Ward in 2025.
	3.1.3 Invest in cultural visitor attractions that have potential to attract national visitors for a broad season (April-October) and across the district. This could centre around visual arts, via Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Killerton House and Ocean, along with galleries and public art	Long	In Progress	Cultural Tourism Map supports visitor attractions throughout the year & promotes sustainable travel. Printed advert of cultural map in the Guardian in 2025.

3.2 Support and promote festivals and events which bring significant visitor spend and profile to East Devon, building on current strengths	3.2.1 Work with independent promoters and local Destination Marketing Organisations, as well as the in-house events team, to maximise impact from notable events and festivals, with particular focus on those that take place in June/early July and September/October (i.e. beyond the peak tourism season)	Medium	In Progress	Supporting Screen Devon and increasing filming in the area will deliver significant economic impact. Cultural Map features 12 festivals. Currently include event 'highlight of the month' in ACED newsletter. Creative East Devon Fund supporting events in off peak season such as Sidmouth School of Art Winter Lights Festival, Sidmouth Jazz Festival & Budleigh Music Festival. Ran a Google Ads campaign promoting festivals in shoulder season in 2025. EDNL supported Sidmouth Walking Festival (2025), Ottery St Mary Food & Families Festival (2024) & the Exmouth Festival (2025) through the East Devon National Landscape Fund (formerly known as Communities Project Fund).
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Theme 4

Creative enterprise and skills

Build inspiring talent development pathways for the current and next generation of ED creatives

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Comments
4.1 Develop opportunities for young people to learn and apply creative and cultural skills in East Devon	4.1.1 Explore the concept of a creative digital skills hub for films, TV and gaming – possibly linked to the Future Skills Centre run by Exeter College	Medium/Long	In Progress	Feasibility study drafted to link with new Screen Devon who aim to offer access 1-to-1 mentoring from screen industry experts.
	4.1.2 Join Devon Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) and/or explore the value in setting up a more localised LCEP to strengthen links between the cultural sector and schools / education providers	Short	In Progress	DAISI (Devon Art in Schools Initiative) awarded a CEDF grant of £2800 to deliver workshops in ED schools in 2025. Requested to join DLCEP in Feb 2025 - still waiting to hear.

	4.1.3 Coordinate a programme of paid creative apprenticeships across a range of East Devon cultural organisations, to provide pathways to employment and increase capacity of the local cultural sector	Medium/Long	In Progress	Potentially this can be funded by gifting leftover levy to assist local orgs, however currently no underspend so ACED Mentoring programme set up in the interim in March 2024 (supporting 6 mentees to date). Challenges of creative apprenticeships: Businesses are unable to fund new apprentices and unable to spare the human resource to support new apprentices. Lots of cultural sector work is project based (i.e. not full time or '9 to 5') so is not suited to fulfilling apprenticeship hours. Apprenticeships are therefore not the most suitable form of training for creative and cultural careers; ACED mentoring scheme more suitable. Screen Devon aim to engage over 40 individuals in skills development workshop & mentoring sessions in 2025. EDDC events looking to take on an Events Apprentice. THG & Screen Devon take on interns from Exeter University.
	4.1.4 Establish a regular Youth Forum for young creatives and activists to help shape and influence the cultural offer	Short	In Progress	COS (Create Our Space) youth network at THG launched in June 2023 and continues to meet regularly. The Hive Youth Centre in Exmouth has a music room rehearsal space. Manor Pavilion Theatre hosts Sidmouth Youth Drama Academy. Challenge to ensure there is a district wide offer.
4.2 Utilise empty or underused spaces for creative activities	4.2.1 Run a pilot programme to enable artists and community groups to take meanwhile leases on empty shops, for use as studios, workshops and pop-up galleries	Medium	In Progress	Creative East Devon Fund encourages use of empty spaces for creative projects. Relatively few vacant properties available but EDDC lettings are now shared on ACED website. CEDF funding of £2784 for the Love of the Railway project in Axminster, making use of empty shop. East Devon Business Centre displays art.

	4.2.2 Invest in co-working, workshop and mixed use spaces to strengthen community infrastructure, especially in new developments, and take advantage of the shift away from commuting and towards local working	Medium/Long	In Progress	Piloted 3 ACED co-working days at ED libraries in 2024 to create space for networking beyond network meetings - limited take up so discontinued.
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Theme 5

New places for culture

Ensure all East Devon residents, especially children and young people, can experience high quality culture and creativity in their local areas

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Comments
5.1 5.1 Explore the concept of Exmouth Cultural Quarter as a way to link the town's activities and develop new or improved places and spaces for culture	5.1.1 Link with the Exmouth place-making and masterplan to audit/understand current provision, local needs and opinions to shape a vision and delivery plan for culture in the town	Short	In Progress	Exmouth Placemaking Plan 2 in process of being finalised (public consultation in Nov 2025) which will give clear steer of how to support in this area.
	5.1.2 Explore the potential of Exmouth Pavilion as a creative hub for young people	Medium/Long	In Progress	Managed by LED. Meeting in November to discuss further.

5.2 Integrate cultural spaces and opportunities into new housing developments	5.2.1 Work with local residents, Libraries Unlimited and other partners to ensure Cranbrook and other new housing developments have an appropriate, high quality cultural offer co-designed with local residents	Medium	In Progress	Creative Cabin visited Cranbrook in summer & Autumn 2023 with high engagement numbers (750). CEDF supported Youth Arts & Health Trust with grant of £3K to deliver Cranbrook Arts Pilot with Cranbrook Education Campus and Cranbrook Community Hub. Leisure Centre and library space in cafe also in development in Cranbrook.
	5.2.2 Lever planning gain to embed new indoor and outdoor cultural spaces for culture in new developments	Medium	In Progress	This presents a challenge in Cranbrook as EDDC does not own the land. This is being considered in planning for new town Marlcombe (considering revenue funding for staff specialising in community growth).

Theme 6

Connectivity

Support the sector to connect, work collectively, share best practice and lever investment through greater joint working

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Comments
6.1 Resource and promote Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) as a network, connector and champion of the local creative and cultural sector, working with members to shape its ongoing development	6.1.1 Continue building the ACED network via regular meetings, newsletters, information-sharing and socials	Short/ Medium	In Progress	Currently 222 members signed up to the new ACED Directory (www.aced.org.uk) which launched in June 2023. 9 ACED Network meetings coordinated, including speakers from the Arts Council, National Lottery Heritage, Digital Culture Network, Creative UK and Screen Devon.

6.1.2 Convene a steering group to devise a business plan for ACED, reflecting on success to date and exploring how best to democratise its leadership and management, maximise effectiveness and build its role in supporting delivery of this Cultural Strategy	Short	In Progress	Have recruited x11 new ACED Champions who meet 3 times a year: Libraries, Museum & Heritage, Music, Film & Media, Film and Creative Education & Climate Change, Festivals & Inclusion. The Champions co-chair network meetings and form the panel for the annual ACED Volunteer of the Year Award.
6.1.3 Establish new networks that link with ACED, to provide specialised communities of practice	Short/Medium	In Progress	This is being done informally through ACED Network with several ACED Champion leading sub networks in specialised categories, inc: East Devon Museum Group, Film Networking group and ED Festival Networking Group.

Theme 7

Cultural leadership

Be ambitious and drive change by bringing together a diverse range of partners to drive forward and advocate for the Cultural Strategy and secure inward investment

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Comments
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7.1 Provide leadership and stewardship to drive forward the strategy and bring partners on board	7.1.1 Establish a Cultural Compact or other partnership to lead this strategy, including collaborative projects and shared funding bids	Short	On hold	Completed research - Dorset & Somerset do not have a Cultural Compact in place as not best model for rural area, looking into alternative options such as an advisory group focused on a specific project (e.g. Marlcombe). Arts Council confirmed no need to set up cultural compact if not suitable for rural area.
	7.1.2 Integrate Cultural Strategy Objectives and Actions into wider Council plans, staff work schedules and resource planning to understand what resources are available and where gaps remain	Short/Medium	In Progress	Strong links established with Event Teams, Economic Development & place making. ACED website is raising awareness.
	7.1.3 Invest in a Cultural Producer to provide a central hub for our strategic values, advocacy, communications and development of the strategy, including coordination of the Cultural Compact and ACED network	Short/Medium	Completed	Appointed in Jan 2023.
	7.1.4 Assign a small budget to pay freelancers for their time in strategic leadership roles, such as the Cultural Compact	Short	Not started	Currently not necessary but ACED Champions can now claim travel expenses for ACED Network meetings in an official volunteer capacity.

Capture value

Ensure continuous learning and improvement by monitoring and evaluating the change that creativity and culture has on people and place

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Progress	Comments
8.1 Develop a single evaluation process that captures the social, economic, environmental and health & wellbeing value of culture, enabling advocacy for the sector as a whole	8.1.1 Work with Arts Council England and other regional partners, such as Plymouth or Exeter to explore tools available for measuring impact across East Devon cultural organisations	Medium	In Progress	A single evaluation process has been created relating to strategy goals which is completed annually by: THG, Manor Pavilion, Villages in Action, South West Museums Development and recipients of the Creative East Devon Fund. EDDC is looking to invest in the South West Visitor Economy Hub in 26/27 to track specific visitor data. Quarterly meetings with the South West Culture Network regularly discuss evaluation methodology.